



# CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON BRAND PREFERENCE OF SELECTED FOOD PRODUCTS – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KERALA

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The aspirations and the attitudes of the consumers are changing at a dismaying speed which needs to be caught and catered to. The markets, competitors and consumers are no longer passive. In a passive market, a marketer is likely to be successful despite his inertia, where as in an active market, inertia on the part of marketer will lead to the extinction either slow or quick. To be successful marketers have to become more responsive and adaptive to market situation. As regards target market, marketers should analyze the three core aspects viz, consumer perception, motivation and attitudes towards a given need. These three are interrelated and interdependent. It is of vital importance to understand the current perceptions held by the consumers towards the product and brands. Consumer motivation is a central theme in the theory of marketing. It is strategic to explore why a consumer is buying a brand. The perceptions and motivational mechanisms result in attitude. Attitude is an emotionalized predisposition towards a product or brand. A consumer may have positive or negative attitude. Therefore a marketer must know the attitudes of consumers towards the product and different brands.

In order to collect data, consumers were personally met by administering a questionnaire specifically developed for the present study. A sample 300 consumers, 50 each from Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Kannur districts were selected. Percentages, Mean SD etc are some of the statistical tools used for analysis.

## Usage of info –entertainment media

Table 1 presents information relating to the habit of people in using various information and entertainment media like newspaper, magazine, radio, television and internet.

**Table 1**  
Extent of exposure to media by sample consumers

| Media    | Yes            | No             | Total           |
|----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Daily    | 233<br>(77.67) | 67<br>(22.33)  | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Monthly  | 99<br>(33.00)  | 201<br>(67.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Radio    | 88<br>(29.33)  | 212<br>(70.67) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| TV       | 250<br>(83.33) | 50<br>(16.67)  | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Internet | 43<br>(14.33)  | 257<br>(85.67) | 300<br>(100.00) |

Source: Survey Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis denote percentage

It can be observed from the table that more than eighty percent of the members use television and more than 75 percent of the members use newspaper as the info –entertainment media. While radio occupies the third position, magazine stands in the fourth position. Internet is the least preferred media used by the consumers for this purpose.

## Consumer preference

The preference of the consumers towards branded, non branded and homemade products is illustrated in Table 2

**Table 2**  
Preference of consumers towards nature of products

| Product      | B              | NB             | HM             | B&NB        | B&HM          | NB&HM       | ALL         | Total           |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Curry powder | 204<br>(68.00) | 1<br>(0.33)    | 69<br>(23.00)  | 1<br>(0.33) | 23<br>(7.67)  | 0<br>(0.00) | 2<br>(0.67) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Pickle       | 104<br>(34.67) | 30<br>(10.00)  | 104<br>(34.67) | 0<br>(0.00) | 61<br>(20.33) | 1<br>(0.33) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Jam          | 260<br>(86.67) | 9<br>(3.00)    | 26<br>(8.67)   | 1<br>(0.33) | 4<br>(1.33)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Squash       | 263<br>(87.67) | 14<br>(4.67)   | 22<br>(7.33)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 1<br>(0.33)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Avil         | 108<br>(36.00) | 156<br>(52.00) | 35<br>(11.67)  | 1<br>(0.33) | 0<br>(0.00)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Pappad       | 181<br>(60.33) | 97<br>(32.33)  | 20<br>(6.67)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 2<br>(0.67)   | 0<br>(0.00) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |
| Chips        | 53<br>(17.67)  | 156<br>(52.00) | 80<br>(26.66)  | 1<br>(0.33) | 5<br>(1.67)   | 5<br>(1.67) | 0<br>(0.00) | 300<br>(100.00) |

Source: Survey Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis denote percentage

B – Branded NB – Non branded HM – Home made

In case of curry powder, jam, squash and pappad, more than 60 percent of the people prefer branded products. In case of pickle, the preference of the consumers towards branded and home made products are equal. However in case of avil and chips 52 percent have preference for non branded products.

## Reason for the use of branded products

**Table 3**  
Reason for using branded products

| Reason              | Number of consumers | Percent |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Convenience         | 121                 | 40.33   |
| Taste               | 70                  | 23.33   |
| Shelf life          | 19                  | 6.34    |
| Others              | 30                  | 10.00   |
| Convenience & taste | 60                  | 20.00   |
| Total               | 300                 | 100.00  |

Source: Survey Data

121 respondents (40.33 percent) opined that the reason for their preference is convenience. 70 persons (23.33 percent) feel that branded products are tastier. Only 19 persons (6.34 percent) are concerned about the shelflife of the product.

## Brand loyalty of sample consumers

The concept of brand loyalty implies that the consumers have some real preference for a particular brand.

**Table 4**  
**Consumer brand loyalty**

| Products     | Below3 months | 3 to 6 months | 6 to 9 months | 9 to 12 months | above12 months | Total           |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Curry powder | 29<br>(12.61) | 23<br>(10.00) | 12<br>(5.22)  | 66<br>(28.70)  | 100<br>(43.48) | 230<br>(100.00) |
| Pickle       | 21<br>(12.65) | 22<br>(13.25) | 75<br>(45.18) | 11<br>(6.63)   | 37<br>(22.29)  | 166<br>(100.00) |
| Jam          | 30<br>(11.32) | 19<br>(7.17)  | 11<br>(4.15)  | 15<br>(5.66)   | 190<br>(71.70) | 265<br>(100.00) |
| Squash       | 23<br>(8.71)  | 12<br>(4.55)  | 16<br>(6.06)  | 17<br>(6.44)   | 196<br>(74.24) | 264<br>(100.00) |
| Avil         | 31<br>(28.44) | 11<br>(10.09) | 20<br>(18.35) | 21<br>(19.27)  | 26<br>(23.85)  | 109<br>(100.00) |
| Pappad       | 70<br>(38.25) | 38<br>(20.77) | 25<br>(13.66) | 14<br>(7.65)   | 36<br>(19.67)  | 183<br>(100.00) |
| Chips        | 20<br>(31.25) | 15<br>(23.44) | 3<br>(4.69)   | 6<br>(9.38)    | 20<br>(31.25)  | 64<br>(100.00)  |

Source: Survey Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis denote percentage

Most of the consumers in case of squash (74.24 percent), jam (71.70 percent) and curry powder (43.48 percent) were using the present brand for a period of more than 12 months. Hence they are very much brand loyal. In the case of pickle out of 166 consumers using branded products, 75 (45.18 percent) are using the current brand for a period of 6 to 9 months. These groups are moderately loyal. Avil, pappad and chips are the commodities in which case the largest share of consumers opined that they are not at all brand loyal.

#### Consumer purchase criteria

A particular brand could be purchased because of quality, price advantage, offers, convenience or availability if credit facilities

**Table 5**  
**Consumer purchase criteria**

|              | Quality |         | Cost     |         | Offer    |         | Convenience |         | Credit   |         |
|--------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|----------|---------|
|              | Number  | Percent | Number   | Percent | Number   | Percent | Number      | Percent | Number   | Percent |
| Curry powder | 256     | 85.33   | 71       | 23.67   | 36       | 12.00   | 155         | 51.67   | 23       | 7.67    |
| Pickle       | 271     | 90.33   | 42       | 14.00   | 20       | 6.67    | 228         | 76.00   | 16       | 5.33    |
| Jam          | 107     | 35.67   | 48       | 16.00   | 25       | 8.33    | 219         | 73.00   | 18       | 6.00    |
| Squash       | 104     | 34.67   | 42       | 14.00   | 31       | 10.33   | 221         | 73.67   | 15       | 5.00    |
| Avil         | 74      | 24.67   | 28       | 9.33    | 17       | 5.67    | 237         | 79.00   | 20       | 6.67    |
| Pappad       | 97      | 32.33   | 31       | 10.33   | 18       | 6.00    | 225         | 75.00   | 16       | 5.33    |
| Chips        | 62      | 20.67   | 32       | 10.67   | 21       | 7.00    | 251         | 83.67   | 18       | 6.00    |
| Total        | 971     | 46.24   | 294      | 14.00   | 168      | 8.00    | 1536        | 73.14   | 126      | 6.00    |
| p- value     | 0.00000 |         | 0.000003 |         | 0.032362 |         | 0.000000    |         | 0.843230 |         |

Source: Survey Data

It can be noted from the table that the consumers are very quality conscious in buying curry powder and pickle. In case of these two products quality is the most important factor followed by convenience, cost, offer and credit respectively. Convenience is the prime consideration of the consumers for all the other products, viz, jam, squash, avil, pappad and chips, followed by quality. Offers and credit facilities do not attract them much.

**Table 6**  
**Source of purchase by sample consumers**

| Source             | Number | Percent |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| Nearby shop        | 87     | 29.00   |
| Specific shop      | 41     | 13.67   |
| Margin free market | 151    | 50.33   |
| Co-operative store | 18     | 6.00    |
| Elsewhere          | 3      | 1.00    |
| Total              | 300    | 100.00  |

Source: Survey Data

As per Table 6.16, people mostly prefer margin free markets (50.33 percent) for buying their daily requirements. 87 consumers (29 percent) have a liking for nearby shops for their purchase. This is followed by particular shops (13.67 percent) and co-operative stores (6 percent). Only 1 percent has a preference for other places.

#### Level of awareness of (sales) promotion tools by sample consumers

Awareness refers to what extent the consumers do or do not know about the various promotion tools.

**Table 7**  
**Consumer awareness**

| Promotion methods         | Number of consumers |         |           |         |        |         |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|
|                           | Aware               |         | Not aware |         | Total  |         |
|                           | Number              | Percent | Number    | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Discount                  | 206                 | 68.67   | 94        | 31.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Coupon                    | 153                 | 51.00   | 147       | 49.00   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Rebate                    | 56                  | 18.67   | 244       | 81.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Bundling                  | 60                  | 20.00   | 240       | 80.00   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Free sample               | 204                 | 68.00   | 94        | 32.00   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Gift and Compliment       | 190                 | 63.33   | 110       | 36.67   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Contest                   | 60                  | 20.00   | 240       | 80.00   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Trading stamp             | 23                  | 7.67    | 277       | 92.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Point of purchase display | 236                 | 78.67   | 64        | 21.33   | 300    | 100.00  |

Source: Survey Data

As consumer awareness increases, they become more organized, more efficient and more accurate in their information processing. It can be detected from the table that majority of the people are aware of five out of nine techniques. Point of purchase display (78.67 percent), discount (68.67 percent), free samples (68.00 percent), gifts and compliments (63.33 percent) and coupons (51.00 percent) are the techniques that the consumers are aware of, given in the order of their awareness. Most of the people are unfamiliar with trading stamps (7.67 percent), rebate (18.67 percent), bundling (20.00 percent) and contests (20.00 percent) as promotion tools.

#### Assessment about promotion tools

Price off, coupon, gift and compliment, free sample and point of purchase display are some of the major promotion tools.

**Table 8**  
**Assessment about promotion tools**

| Promotion tools           | Attractive |         | Not attractive |         | Total  |         |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|----------------|---------|--------|---------|
|                           | Number     | Percent | Number         | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Price off/Discount        | 204        | 68.00   | 96             | 32.00   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Coupon                    | 62         | 20.67   | 238            | 79.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Gift and Compliment       | 80         | 26.67   | 220            | 73.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Free sample               | 185        | 61.67   | 115            | 38.33   | 300    | 100.00  |
| Point of purchase display | 217        | 72.33   | 83             | 27.67   | 300    | 100.00  |

Source: Survey Data

As regards the attractiveness of sales promotion tools, point of purchase display (72.33 percent) is the most attractive tool followed by discount (68.00 percent) and free samples (61.67 percent). Coupons (20.67 percent) are considered to be the least attractive technique.

#### Motivational factors to purchase the currently used brand

It is interesting to study the immediate cause of purchasing a particular brand of a product.

**Table 9**  
Factors motivated to purchase the currently used brand

| Products     |      | Price off/<br>Discount | Coupon | Free<br>gift | Free<br>sample | Display |
|--------------|------|------------------------|--------|--------------|----------------|---------|
| Curry powder | Mean | 29.22                  | 1.85   | 4.20         | 22.96          | 41.77   |
|              | SD   | 15.17                  | 5.44   | 11.30        | 7.70           | 17.02   |
| Pickle       | Mean | 28.10                  | 1.63   | 2.88         | 23.87          | 43.52   |
|              | SD   | 12.53                  | 5.14   | 9.09         | 6.57           | 14.79   |
| Jam          | Mean | 34.17                  | 6.55   | 15.40        | 17.35          | 26.53   |
|              | SD   | 20.82                  | 7.28   | 13.43        | 10.01          | 16.46   |
| Squash       | Mean | 35.67                  | 5.20   | 17.18        | 19.92          | 22.03   |
|              | SD   | 23.00                  | 6.95   | 17.33        | 13.69          | 17.35   |
| Chips        | Mean | 25.63                  | 6.53   | 10.15        | 26.68          | 31.00   |
|              | SD   | 21.71                  | 9.90   | 15.93        | 25.46          | 28.27   |
| Avil         | Mean | 44.22                  | 1.95   | 5.25         | 6.27           | 42.32   |
|              | SD   | 21.25                  | 5.05   | 11.25        | 10.45          | 22.71   |
| Pappad       | Mean | 44.70                  | 1.62   | 3.85         | 8.80           | 41.03   |
|              | SD   | 24.16                  | 5.07   | 11.21        | 13.88          | 25.05   |
| All Groups   | Mean | 34.53                  | 3.62   | 8.42         | 17.98          | 35.46   |
|              | SD   | 21.37                  | 6.96   | 14.15        | 15.57          | 22.29   |
| p-level      |      | 0.0000                 | 0.0000 | 0.0000       | 0.0000         | 0.0000  |

Source: Survey Data

It is observed that the people of Kerala maintain the habit of using a specific brand for a considerably long period of time (Table 6.12). Display obtains the highest mean value in case of pickle (43.52), curry powder (41.77) and chips (31.00) followed by discount in case of pappad (44.70), avil (44.22), squash (35.67) and jam (34.17). Coupon is considered to be the promotion tool with the least mean value.

#### Reason for purchase

**Table 10**

| Reason          | Curry powder | Pickle | Jam    | Squash | Avil   | Pappad | Chips  |
|-----------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Offer           | 6.09         | 12.05  | 4.53   | 5.68   | 4.59   | 1.09   | 7.81   |
| Advertisement   | 34.35        | 12.65  | 58.49  | 56.06  | 8.26   | 3.28   | 9.38   |
| Retailers       | 16.96        | 15.66  | 10.19  | 9.85   | 32.11  | 9.29   | 12.50  |
| Friends         | 10.43        | 7.23   | 6.04   | 7.58   | 1.83   | 3.83   | 4.69   |
| Convention      | 13.91        | 4.22   | 8.30   | 6.06   | 11.01  | 16.39  | 26.56  |
| Sudden decision | 5.22         | 43.37  | 5.66   | 6.82   | 33.03  | 56.28  | 21.88  |
| Others          | 13.04        | 4.82   | 6.79   | 7.95   | 9.17   | 9.84   | 17.19  |
| Total           | 100.00       | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: Survey Data

In case of jam (58.49 percent), squash (56.06 percent) and curry powder (34.35 percent), advertisement is the leading factor that motivated consumers to purchase the present brand. But it is sudden decision in case of pappad (56.28 percent) pickle (43.37 percent) and avil (33.03 percent) and convention in case of chips (26.56 percent). The other reasons are found to be unimpressive.

#### Attractiveness of promotion tool

**Table 11**

| Advertisement         | Yes | No  | Yes   | No    |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| TV/Radio              | 269 | 31  | 89.67 | 10.33 |
| Press                 | 113 | 187 | 37.67 | 62.33 |
| Video tape            | 1   | 299 | 0.33  | 99.67 |
| Poster                | 45  | 255 | 15.00 | 85.00 |
| Window display        | 192 | 108 | 64.00 | 36.00 |
| Coupon                | 2   | 298 | 0.67  | 99.33 |
| Packing               | 119 | 181 | 39.67 | 60.33 |
| Publicity             |     |     |       |       |
| Annual report         | 31  | 269 | 10.33 | 89.67 |
| Donation              | 25  | 275 | 8.33  | 91.67 |
| Brochure              | 8   | 292 | 2.67  | 97.33 |
| Publication           | 11  | 289 | 3.67  | 96.33 |
| Sponsorship           | 115 | 185 | 38.33 | 61.67 |
| Personal selling      |     |     |       |       |
| Sales representatives | 112 | 188 | 37.33 | 62.67 |
| Sales Meet            | 16  | 284 | 5.33  | 94.67 |
| Trial packs           | 129 | 171 | 43.00 | 57.00 |
| Fairs                 | 137 | 163 | 45.67 | 54.33 |
| Sales Promotion       |     |     |       |       |
| Samples               | 80  | 220 | 26.67 | 73.33 |
| Premium and gifts     | 55  | 245 | 18.33 | 81.67 |
| Exhibition            | 63  | 237 | 21.00 | 79.00 |
| Demonstration         | 11  | 289 | 3.67  | 96.33 |
| Discount and rebate   | 140 | 160 | 46.67 | 53.33 |
| Product bundling      | 47  | 253 | 15.67 | 84.33 |
| Trading stamps        | 15  | 285 | 5.00  | 95.00 |
| Contest               | 17  | 283 | 5.67  | 94.33 |

Source: Survey Data

Table 11 shows the attractiveness of the four important tools of promotion like advertisement, sales promotion, publicity and personal selling. In case of advertisement, TV/Radio constitute the most attractive tool (89.67%) followed by window display (64.00%), packing (39.67%) and press (37.67%). Sponsorship (38.33%) is the only striking factor among the techniques used for publicity. Out of the methods of personal selling, fairs catch the attention of the consumers more. Among the tools of sales promotion, discount and rebate ranks first, samples second, exhibition third and premium and gifts fourth.

#### Conclusion

Kerala has always been a 'leader state' in food processing. It has been a major exporter of spices, cashews and marine products since independence, accounting for a considerable portion of the country's food exports. Customer perception, satisfaction, tastes and preferences develop more favourable consumer behavior towards particular brands than any other factors. However, it has also been found that there has been huge gap between the effectiveness of marketing strategies of the different retailers and even if some of them have developed competitive strategy and promotional techniques but still they have failed to target the audience effectively. Thus, the market players are eagerly attempting to gain competitive advantage in the market in order to improve their performance, productivity and profitability.